CHURCH TODAY

Volume LV, No. 11 www.diocesealex.org Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970 November 25, 2024

Honoring First Responders

The Blue Mass, a tradition dating back to 1934, was celebrated at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral on November 8 at 12:05 p.m. Hosted by the Diocese of Alexandria, the Mass honored law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel, rescue workers, and other first responders.

Originally created as a prayer service for fallen officers and a blessing for those in service, the Blue Mass derives its name from the traditional color of officers' uniforms and has returned in grander fashion after a hiatus in the mid-1970's.

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Pilgrims of Hope

Bishop Robert W. Marshall, Jr. invites us to embrace the Jubilee Year 2025 with renewed faith, reconciliation, and acts of charity. See more on page 2.

Advent Confession Opportunity

Most churches in the Diocese of Alexandria will host an evening for the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Dec. 5, with additional opportunities on Dec. 4 or Dec. 6. Please see a list of dates and times on page 3.

Building trust with Middle Schoolers

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Live, Jesus, in our Hearts Forever

By Bishop Robert W. Marshall, Jr.

Pilgrims of Hope: 2025 Jubilee Year

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

"Spes non confundit – Hope does not disappoint." With this quote from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, our Holy Father Pope Francis summons us as "Pilgrims of Hope" to celebrate 2025 as a Jubilee Year. Since the year 1300, the Church has invited the faithful to observe Jubilees – at first, every 100 years; later, every 50 years; and more recently, every 25 years. Recalling the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 proclaimed by Pope St. John Paul II, in which we joyfully welcomed the new millennium, Pope Francis calls us to look beyond the difficulties of the present age and to experience hope:

Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope.

As pilgrims of this renewed hope, we are invited to journey toward a prayerful encounter with the Lord at sacred spaces throughout the world – the four major basilicas in Rome, other historic and sacred sites in the Holy Land, and many other great churches all over the world. A pilgrimage to a sacred space is an ancient tradition. In St. Luke's gospel, we are told that the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary and Joseph – travelled annually to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. Great Eucharistic Pilgrimages converged in Indianapolis this past summer for the National Eucharistic Congress, and "Walking with One" is the ongoing activity of this final year of the National Eucharistic Revival. In this diocese, I will designate St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria, the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Natchitoches, and several other local churches as Jubilee pilgrimage sites. Look for a "Pilgrim's Passport" as a guide to these diocesan sites in the coming year. A true pilgrimage, however, is less about the number of miles travelled, and more about an authentic journey of the heart toward a new or deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. May our pilgrimages of hope in 2025 – whether long or short – draw us more closely to our loving God.

We will be building on the message of hope in other ways in the coming year. In the Diocese of Alexandria, we will soon begin a program of pastoral planning and discernment to help us come together as one church and to embrace a future of hope. Each parish and mission will be invited to acknowledge their particular blessings and challenges and discern how they might more effectively proclaim the Kingdom of God. Look for an announcement about this project on Tuesday, December 3, the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, our patron saint.

Another characteristic of a Jubilee Year is an emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness. Each of us is invited to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis. The fountain of God's mercy flows abundantly from the Sacred Heart of Christ – we are invited to drink from that fountain and to experience the grace of forgiveness offered to us by the Father. Our parishes will make a renewed effort to offer opportunities for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation individually and we, as a Church, will be seeking God's forgiveness for the sins of the past too often carried out in the name of the Church. More than that, we are encouraged to imitate the love and mercy of God by becoming a more forgiving people – leaving behind the grudges and grievances of the past and seeking reconciliation with those who may have hurt us.

A Jubilee Year also challenges us to put our faith into practice – by engaging in spiritual reading, studying the Bible or aspects of Sacred Tradition at your parish or at one nearby and by acts of charity and corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Our minds may expand in study and we may experience a closeness with the Lord in prayer and certainly in our reception of the Eucharist, but Jesus Himself invites us to encounter Him in the face of a brother or sister in need or our comfort, compassion or assistance. We will be inviting your participation in both efforts at growth and evangelization and in acts of charity and works of mercy throughout the year.

Our observance of this year will begin on the Feast of the Holy Family – Sunday, December 29 – with a procession to St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. Visit our website – www.diocesealex.org – or check out our Facebook or Instagram pages for the details of this and other Jubilee Year celebrations. May we draw closer together as one church in this Jubilee Year – closer to our ever-faithful God and closer to our brothers and sisters in faith. Embrace this year of hope!

Live Jesus in our hearts,
Most Reverend
Robert W. Marshall, Jr.
Bishop of Alexandria

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The Light Is On for You: Advent Day of Reconciliation

In addition to Advent penance services, the Diocese of Alexandria will offer an Advent day for confession on Dec. 5 when most churches within the Diocese will offer a time in the evening to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Some churches may offer this on Dec. 4 or Dec. 6 due to previously scheduled events. Please check www.diocesealex.org for times.

If your church is not listed, contact your church parish office.

Thursday, Dec. 5

12:00 p.m. -- MB of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches

4:00-5:00 p.m. -- St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria

4:00-5:00 p.m. -- St. Genevieve Church, Brouillette

4:00-6:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth

4:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. Anthony of Padua Church, Bunkie

5:00-6:30 p.m. -- Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tioga

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. James Memorial Church, Alexandria

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. Juliana Church, Alexandria

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. Francis de Sales, Echo

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- Sts. Francis and Anne Church, Kolin

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. John the Baptist Church, Deville

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Fifth Ward

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- Sacred Heart Church, Moreauville

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- Church of the Little Flower, Evergreen

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- Immaculate Conception Church, Dupont

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. Mary Church, Winnsboro

5:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. Edward the Confessor Church, Tallulah

5:30-6:30 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria

5:30-6:30 p.m. -- St. Genevieve Church, Brouillette

5:30-6:30 p.m. -- Christ the King Church, Simmesport

5:30-7:30 p.m. -- St. John the Baptist, Cloutierville

5:30-7:30 p.m. -- St. Patrick Church, Ferriday

6:00-7:00 p.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria

6:00-7:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Vidalia

6:00-8:00 p.m. -- St. Edward Mission Church, Fishville

6:00-8:00 p.m. -- St. Michael the Archangel Church, Leesville

Friday, Dec. 6

12:00 p.m. -- MB of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches

6:00-7:30 p.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria

The Advent Season

Advent begins the Church's liturgical year, preparing us for Christ's second coming, and the celebration of His birth. Marked by the color purple, it's a time of reflection, penance, and readiness.

From December 17-24, the "O" Antiphons highlight Christ as the fulfillment of hope. Devotions like the Advent wreath and calendar help focus our hearts.

Visit the USCCB website for resources, including bilingual Advent calendars.

Before the holiday rush

By Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board

If it seems like a long lead-up to Thanksgiving this year, that's because it is. The holiday will be celebrated on the latest possible date this month, creating what feels like an unusual mid-November lull. The turkeys might be on order, Black Friday might be looming, but nevertheless we find ourselves with a few days to take a beat before the holiday rush. Three days after Thanksgiving this year, Advent begins, and we will be off to the races. But, for now, we wait for the feasting, and we wait for the waiting.

How might we best make use of this "extra" time? "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus," St. Paul writes (1 Thes 5:18). As our nation prepares to do just that, perhaps we could use the additional time at hand to ask God to make our hearts more amenable to the task. A Novena of Gratitude, available on praymorenovenas.com, asks for God to "Help us to grow in gratitude each day, in every circumstance." Taking a short amount of time for nine days leading up to Thanksgiving may help us to adopt a grateful posture on that day, and on every day. We could also take this opportunity to go to confession, reconciling our souls with God and allowing us to begin the busy season to come with a clean slate.

A little extra time before Thanksgiving also allows us to take a moment to remember those who are less fortunate. "Let us not forget the poor," Pope Francis pleaded Nov. 17, not for the first time, during his homily for the World Day of the Poor. "We are the ones that must make (God's) grace shine forth through lives steeped in compassion and charity that become signs of the Lord's presence, always close to the suffering of the poor in order to heal their wounds and transform their fortune," he said. "Brothers and sisters, let us not forget that Christian hope, fulfilled in Jesus and realized in his kingdom, needs us and our commitment, it needs our faith expressed in works of charity, and it needs Christians who do not look the other way."

Perhaps in these next days, we could remember the poor more effectively. Could we select two tags for the Advent giving tree instead of one? Could we eat a simpler holiday meal, and give what would have been spent on extravagant feasting to a charity? Could we invite someone we know is alone for the holidays to join us at our table? In all of these ways, we remember those who may have less than we do on this earth, yet are bound for the kingdom of God (Lk 6:20).

Finally, as we get ourselves ready for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord in a little more than one short month, now is an ideal time to craft a plan for how to do it well. The 2024 "Oriens" journal (OSV, 2024), now in its fifth year, helps Advent pilgrims walk each day of the season with intentionality. For families, "The Jesse Tree for Families" (OSV, 2023) is another excellent resource. The Hallow app is hosting another Advent Pray25 challenge, which creates an opportunity to pray each day of the season via its platform.

As we prepare for the hustle and bustle that is all too often used as a synonym for this time of year, let's take the opportunity offered us by a later than usual Thanksgiving to pause and reflect. Increased gratitude, confession, remembering the poor, and planning an Advent with intentionality can help us approach the holidays with the heart of Christ.

The members of the OSV Editorial Board include Father Patrick Briscoe, OP; Gretchen R. Crowe; Paulina Guzik; Matthew Kirby; Peter Jesserer Smith and Scott P. Richert.

Building connections with middle schoolers: A four-step approach

By Cari Terracina
Steubenville South Coordinator

Middle schoolers are at a pivotal stage of life—curious, energetic, and forming the values that will guide them into adulthood. Engaging with this age group, whether as a parent, teacher, coach, or mentor, requires intentionality and a bit of strategy.

Experts suggest a simple but effective framework for building trust and connection with middle schoolers: Meet, Invite, Listen, Enjoy.

By following these four steps, you can help middle schoolers feel seen, valued, and supported during this formative time.

Step 1: Meet Them Where They Are

Middle schoolers come with diverse personalities—some are outgoing and boisterous, while others are reserved and introspective. To connect effectively, it's essential to match their energy.

• For the quiet personalities: Approach calmly. A high-energy interaction might make them feel overwhelmed. Instead, observe their demeanor and respond with the same gentleness.

• For outgoing personalities: Bring energy and enthusiasm, but don't overshadow them. Matching their charisma builds credibility and creates a foundation for meaningful engagement.

This approach is like stepping into their world. When you meet them where they are, you build a bridge of trust that invites deeper connection.

Step 2: Invite Them to Engage

Once you've gained their attention, extend an invitation—whether it's to participate in an activity, share an idea, or consider a new perspective. Trust is the cornerstone of a successful invitation.

Begin with simple requests, like asking them to focus during a group activity or to take a break from their phone. Then, build on that trust to invite them into more meaningful opportunities, such as:

• Joining a team or community group.

• Exploring their beliefs and values.

• Reflecting on how they can make a difference in the world.

The ultimate goal is to create space for middle schoolers

"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

1 Timothy 4:12

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to grow and discover their potential.

Step 3: Listen with Intent

Middle schoolers spend much of their day listening to others—teachers, parents, and peers. But how often are they truly heard? Listening with intention is a powerful way to show respect and build rapport.

- Be present: Put distractions aside and focus on them.
- Ask questions: Show genuine interest in their experiences.
- Be patient: They're

See MIDDLE SCHOOL, page 17

Father Joseph Hasieber, 1941-2024

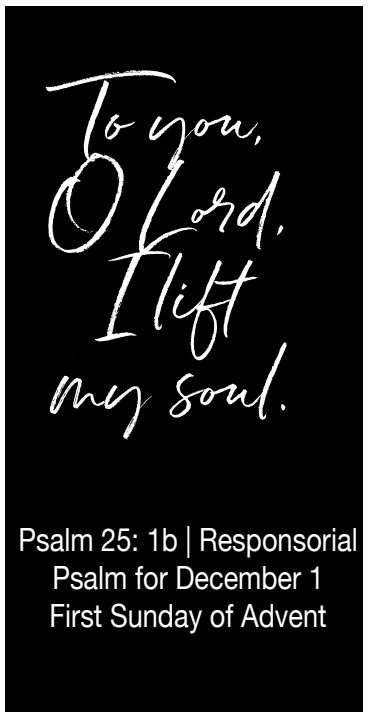
Fr. Joseph Stephen Hasieber, a priest of the Diocese of Alexandria, passed from this life on October 26, 2024 at his home in Alexandria. Born to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hasieber in Washington, D.C. on August 31, 1941, Fr. Hasieber was always proud of his Polish-Czech roots. He was accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Alexandria by Bishop Greco and studied at Mayhill Seminary, St. Mary's College, Notre Dame Seminary and Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary where he finished his theology studies. He was ordained a priest on May 12, 1973.

Reverend Joseph Hasieber

Fr. Hasieber went on to serve as a parochial vicar at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Alexandria, Christ the King Church in Bossier City, St. Joseph's Church in Marksville and St. Catherine of Sienna Church in Shreveport before serving as pastor of St. Mary's Church in Jena. Fr. Hasieber went on to serve as pastor in St. Francis Church in Powhattan and St. Martin's Church in Lecompte. He also served as a chaplain in the Louisiana National Guard and at Central Louisiana State Hospital. Fr. Hasieber also served as a chaplain in the V.A. Medical System before his retirement from active ministry in 2010.

Fr. Hasieber is survived by his brother, John Hasieber, his sister, Jane Davison and his sister, Victoria Idzardi.

A Mass of Christian Burial, celebrated by the Most Reverend Robert W. Marshal, Jr. and concelebrated by priests of the diocese, was held on Wednesday, Oct. 30 under the direction of John Kramer & Son Funeral Home.



Father Robert Courville, 1938-2024

A Mass of Christian Burial was held for Reverend Father Robert Willis Courville on Friday, Nov. 15 at St. Rita Catholic Church with Bishop Robert W. Marshall officiating.

Father Robert Courville, 86, a retired priest of the Diocese of Lafayette, died peacefully on Nov. 11.

At the time of death Father had served in priestly ministry for sixty years and those who knew him enjoy a spirit of gratitude for the hope and joy he shared.

Father Courville was born on Sept. 18, 1938 in Lafayette to Ida and Robert Courville. Father responded to the call to serve as a priest of Jesus Christ by beginning his discernment and preparation at Immaculata Minor Seminary in Lafayette followed by graduate studies at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. He was then ordained to the priesthood on December 21, 1963. He would later pursue further studies earning a Masters in Education from Notre Dame University near South Bend, Indiana.

Reverend Robert Courville

During his many years of priestly ministry he served as Associate Pastor of Saint Bernard in Breaux Bridge, Our Lady of Mercy in Opelousas, Saint Martin of Tours in Saint Martinville, Saint Michael the Archangel in Crowley, and Saint Henry in Lake Charles. Thereafter, he was Pastor of Our Lady of Mercy in Henderson, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Church Point, Saint Francis Regis in Arnaudville, Saint Anthony in Krotz Springs, and finally Saint Ann in Mamou with its mission of Holy Spirit in Vidrine.

He is survived by family, friends, and many former parishioners.

Father Courville had a deep appreciation for the generosity of others, especially those who cared for him. On his behalf the Diocese of Lafayette would especially like to thank the Miguez family for their prayers, friendship, and loving care of Father during his long battle with lymphoma.

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THE CCD STUDENTS FROM ST. PETER/ST. MICHAEL FROM BORDELONVILLE AND BIG BEND sang at All Soul's Mass on Nov. 3. Thanks to Chad Joffrion for teaching the song and to Jory Bordelon for accompanying on guitar.

(above and below) TWO MORE PARISHES WORK TOWARD CATHOLIC EXTENSION INITIATIVE GRANT. St. Rita Church and St. Francis de Sales in Echo held their listening sessions at the end of October. Catholic Extension has entered their second year in offering grants to parishes to enrich the education of youth and families. The three-year program puts into motion ideas generated from the input of parents and parish leaders. During the listening sessions, a facilitator from Catholic Extension spent time hearing from the parish leaders and caregivers of the parish to generate ideas on how the funding can be used. Now it's time for the parishes to submit proposals to Catholic Extension for approval of funding.

The Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative puts Christian parents and caregivers in direct dialogue with catechetical and parish leaders, helping both sides move toward a plan of action in their church communities.

STS. FRANCIS AND ANNE IN KOLIN. The women's group at Sts. Francis and Anne meet every other Sunday at 9:30 a.m. for book and Bible study, prayer, and fellowship.

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ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, ECHO. CCD students hosted our annual outdoor rosary at St. Francis de Sales on Wednesday, Oct. 23.

TENSAS HOMECOMING. Friday, Oct. 19, Tensas Academy hosted their Homecoming event. Fr. Taylor Reynolds officiated with the invocation; Miss Katie [redacted] was crowned Homecoming Queen and Senior Zack [redacted] was senior usher. 1st-Graders August [redacted] and Harper [redacted] were the crown bearer and Flower girls respectively. All are members of St. Joseph Catholic Church in St. Joseph, LA.

THE CCLM (CARING CHRISTIAN LADIES AND MEN), based out of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Winnfield, collected over 500 sweatshirts for North Carolina hurricane victims. The sweatshirts were boxed and delivered to Baton Rouge to the Cajun Navy warehouse. The crates were then packed in an 18-wheeler and delivered to North Carolina.

The CCLM prepared, packed and delivered over 100 meals on Oct. 25 to the shut-ins of Winn Parish at no cost to the recipients. The CCLM brings together people of all faiths who are the hands, feet and voice of Christ in Winnfield.

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA CHILDREN OF MARY CONGREGATION celebrated their October meeting by making St. Thérèse sacrifice beads! St. Thérèse of the Little Flower would use beads just like these to make little acts of love and sacrifices throughout the day by pulling a bead. These also serve as a mini 10 decade rosary for the children to pray daily. St. Thérèse pray for us!

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HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER 2024

For pilgrims of hope:
We pray that this Jubilee Year strengthens our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in our daily lives and that it may transform us into pilgrims of Christan hope.

Thanksgiving as a Catholic

By Dr. Zachary Keith
National Eucharistic Revival

I have always considered Thanksgiving to be one of the most generally wholesome national holidays that we celebrate. When Abraham Lincoln instituted the national holiday, he called on his "fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." Our country has continued to celebrate the day as a national holiday since that time in 1863. Though President Lincoln began the national tradition 159 years ago, his declaration followed a long tradition of setting aside a Thursday to give thanks to God that was begun by George Washington in 1789.

But the practice of stopping to give thanks as a people is part of the earliest traditions of European families settling in what would eventually become the United States. Among these, the oldest and most iconic success story is that of the passengers and crew aboard the Mayflower, who landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Following a harsh winter, during which much of its joined by ninety Wampanoags, who had been instrumental in helping the settlers survive the tough conditions of that first winter.

For my family, the story of the Pilgrims (and non-Pilgrims) aboard the Mayflower isn't just a national folktale: my children and I can trace some of our American roots all the way back to passengers who came across the Atlantic on this Mayflower voyage. In addition to catching some football, eating a delicious family meal, and revisiting the story of the Pilgrims, my family and I also believe it is important to remember that the holiday is first and foremost meant as a day of giving thanks to God. As Catholics, Thanksgiving has an even deeper meaning for us.

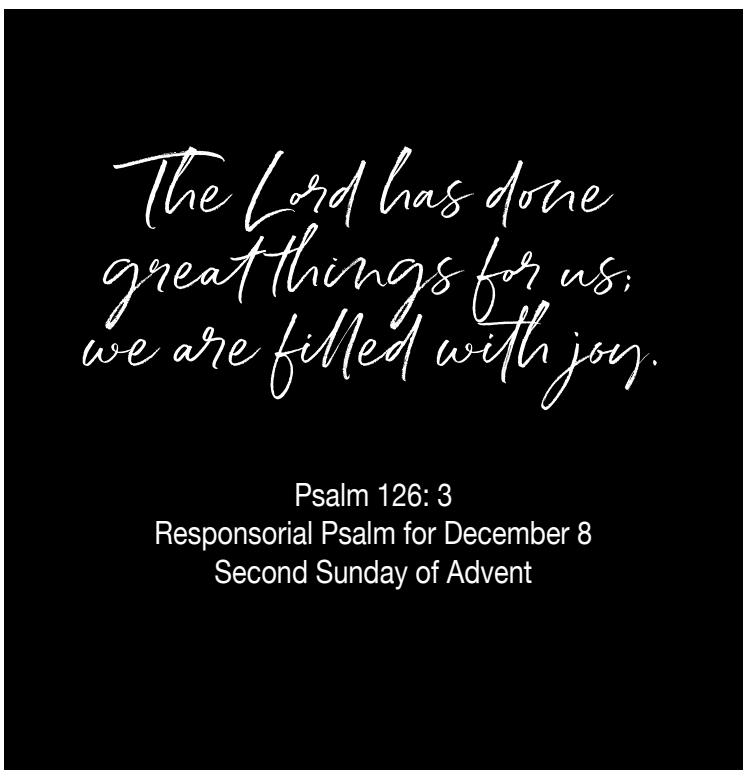
The Action of Thanksgiving

Sure, this is not a universal liturgical feast, but at the core of who we are as a Church is the celebration of the Eucharist. The Catechism of the Catholic Church lists several names for this Sacrament, but the first is "Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God. The Greek words eucharistein and eulogein recall the Jewish blessings that proclaim—especially during a meal—God's works: creation, redemption, and sanctification" (CCC 1328). One of the earliest Catholic texts on the Sacraments is the Didache, written around the beginning of the second century. The author of the text exhorts us, after having been filled with the Eucharist, to give thanks to the Father for his bountiful love (cf. Didache 10).

The Church is revealed and becomes more fully what she is through this wondrous act of thanksgiving, wrapped up in the thanksgiving offered by Christ at the Last Supper. St. Paul teaches us, "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (1 Cor. 11:23-24). As Paul tells us in this this early account of the Last Supper, Jesus does not share his body with the disciples until he has given thanks.

At various times in my life, I have asked Catholics if they have any plans to go to Mass on Thanksgiving Day. Several times I was asked why I want to go to Mass on Thanksgiving, especially since it is a national holiday and not a holy day of obligation. Yet, I cannot think of a better way to celebrate this day than to begin it by giving thanks through Christ Jesus in his offering to the Father. And while we need to remember to

See THANKSGIVING, page 14



"I believe that we have separated our everyday lives so far from the Eucharist that when we hear that a day has been set aside for giving thanks to the Father, we don't even think of the Eucharist."

COME AND SEE WEEKEND. The weekend of Nov. 8-10, Fr. Luke LaFleur, Diocese of Alexandria Vocations director, accompanied two young men to visit St. Joseph Abbey Seminary College in Covington during their Fall Come and See weekend. It was a weekend for discerners to see the campus and meet current seminarians as well as get a glimpse of seminary life.

Lord, we thank you for the goodness of our people
and for the spirit of justice that fills this nation.
We thank you for the beauty and fullness of the land
and the challenge of the cities.
We thank you for our work and our rest, for one another, and for our homes.
We thank you, Lord: accept our thanksgiving on this day.
We pray and give thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gracious and loving God,
we thank you for the gift of our priests.
Through them, we experience
your presence in the sacraments.
Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.
Set their souls on fire with love for your people.
Grant them the wisdom, understanding,
and strength they need to follow
in the footsteps of Jesus.
Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom.
Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel.
Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.
Help them to become
instruments of your divine grace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives
and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.

Upcoming VIRTUS Sessions

Tuesday, Jan. 14, 6:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Catholic Center,
4400 Coliseum Blvd.
ALEXANDRIA

NOTE: Minors are not allowed to attend because of the adult content of the videos and discussions.
To register, go to www.virtus.org.
For more information,
call 318-445-6424, ext. 213.

Seminarian Burses

September and October 2024 Donations

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Jerome and Audrey Vandersypen Burse
Mr. and Mrs. Marian French $100.00
Father Gus Voltz Burse
Mr. and Mrs. Robert O. Miller $200.00
Father Daniel Corkery Burse

Total $1050.00

A Seminary Burse is an invested sum of money, the interest of which is used in perpetuity to help fund the education of men to the priesthood. A Seminary Burse may be names of anyone - bishop, priests, religious, or lay person - chosen by the original donor, and may be added to and allowed to grow. A burse is completed when it reaches $15,000.00 but another burse of the same name can be started. Contributions to any of the burses or to establish a new burse should be sent to:

Chancery Office,
Post Office Box 7417, Alexandria, LA
71306-0417.
--- Very Reverend M. Craig Scott, Chairman

CHRIST THE KING CHURCH IN SIMMESPORT held Trunk-Or-Treat on Saturday, Oct. 26.

CHILDREN FROM ST. FRANCIS DESALES CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ECHO dressed as Saints on Nov. 3.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, ECHO held Trunk-Or-Treat on Saturday, Oct. 26. T-Rex braved the rain to join in the family fun with Fr. Dwight deJesus, pastor of St. Francis de Sales.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH AND THE TOWN OF ST. JOSEPH'S TRUNK OR TREAT, Saturday Oct 26 in downtown St. Joseph, LA. Businesses and churches came together for this community-wide family-focused event. Father Taylor Reynolds, pastor of St. Joseph Church and Diocese of Alexandria Seminarian, Jacob Cass, have a friendly lightsaber sword fight with Elvis looking on.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH, ST. JOSEPH, LA held its parade of Saints on Sunday, Nov. 2.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL HOSTED A THANKSGIVING AND PATRIOTIC PROGRAM On Nov. 15 entitled: "Program of Thanks - The First Thanksgiving" directed by 1A teacher, Mrs. Rhonda Gauthier. Grades 1A and 1B dressed as participants of the First Thanksgiving. The entire school was included in the program, with patriotic music, and "Songs of Thanks." It was attended by several Veterans and families of the students.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE, PARADE OF SAINTS. Friday, Nov. 1, Sacred Heart held its annual Parade of Saints. Many students and teachers dressed as their favorite saint to attend Mass.

SAINTS PARADE, OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR. Fourth graders presented the time-honored tradition by dressing up and parading as their favorite Saints on All Saints Day, Friday, Nov. 1. From St. Michael the Archangel to St. Dymphna, St. Peter to St. Anne, Mother of Mary, the halls were filled with a beautiful array of Saints!

ST. ANTHONY SCHOOL'S ALL SAINTS' DAY PROGRAM. 1st-8th grade voluntarily participated! Each Saint stood in front of the student body at Mass to give facts and highlights about their life on earth.

BLESSING OF THE PETS. Monsignor Scott Chemino, pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Church, Bunkie, blesses the pets for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

BLESSING OF THE GRAVES. Fr. Taylor Reynolds, pastor of St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph, LA and Seminarian Jacob Cass, celebrate Mass at Legion Cemetery in Newllton, LA for All Souls Day.

CABRINIFEST 2024. Saturday, Nov. 2 was a beautiful day for CabriniFest 2024, the annual festival benefitting St. Frances Cabrini School in Alexandria.

Grants help Catholic Charities provide food for community

As we reflect on all that we are thankful for during this month of thanksgiving, we wanted to make you aware of upcoming activities of Catholic Charities and let you know about some sponsorships that we are grateful for. We were recently blessed with a grant from Healthy Blue. This grant funded the Take Home Lunches at the H20 Homeless Outreach event on November 21st. Thank you Healthy Blue for helping us to feed many individuals throughout our community. The grant will also help to cosponsor Christmas Cheer Boxes for the many clients that Catholic Charities works with throughout the year as well as some families in the Glenmora/ Forest Hill area. In addition, Holy Savior Menard is helping with these boxes by collecting rice and beans as well as toys for the children. Christmas Cheer Boxes will be distributed the week of December 16th. Thank you greatly to these sponsors. With the help of people and organizations throughout our area, we are able to make a difference in the lives of many.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES WORKS FOR THE SEASON. Pictured are "Take Home Lunches" for the H20 Homeless Outreach event to be held Nov. 21.

Don't forget that December 3rd is Giving Tuesday. Please remember Catholic Charities on this date. If you would like to donate, visit Alexandria. iGiveCatholic.org.

Services Offered by Catholic Charities of Central LA

Visit cccenla.org to access a variety of services. Appointments are required and can be made online.

- **Mental Health Counseling**
- **Christian Life Coaching**
- **Christian Support Groups:**
  Grief/Loss B.R.E.A.T.H.E.
  Peace in the Mds of Crisis Divorce Support
- **Vaping/Tobacco Cessation (Youth and Adult)**
- **Disaster Preparedness Resources**
- **Financial Literacy Budget Class**
  - in partnership with Red River Bank and OFMS
- ***Assist.Educate.Elevate.***
  Emergency Basic Needs Assistance
  (For those at risk of utility disconnect and eviction, victims of house fires, and information and referral)
- **SNAP Enrollment Assistance**

To support our work, thank you for your donation of time, talent, or treasure!
- **Volunteer** - cccenla.org/volunteer
- **Donate** - cccenla.org/hero-of-hope

Questions? Email info@cccenla.org

Manna House annual Thanksgiving meal

Manna House's annual Thanksgiving meal provides nourishment and support to those in need. To help feed those who might otherwise go hungry this holiday, you can make a tax-deductibel donation at facebook.com/MannaHouseAlex or mail a check to Manna House, P.O. Box. 6011, Alexandria, LA 71307.

Thank you for your generosity!

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Sunday: *11 a.m. - 9 p.m.*

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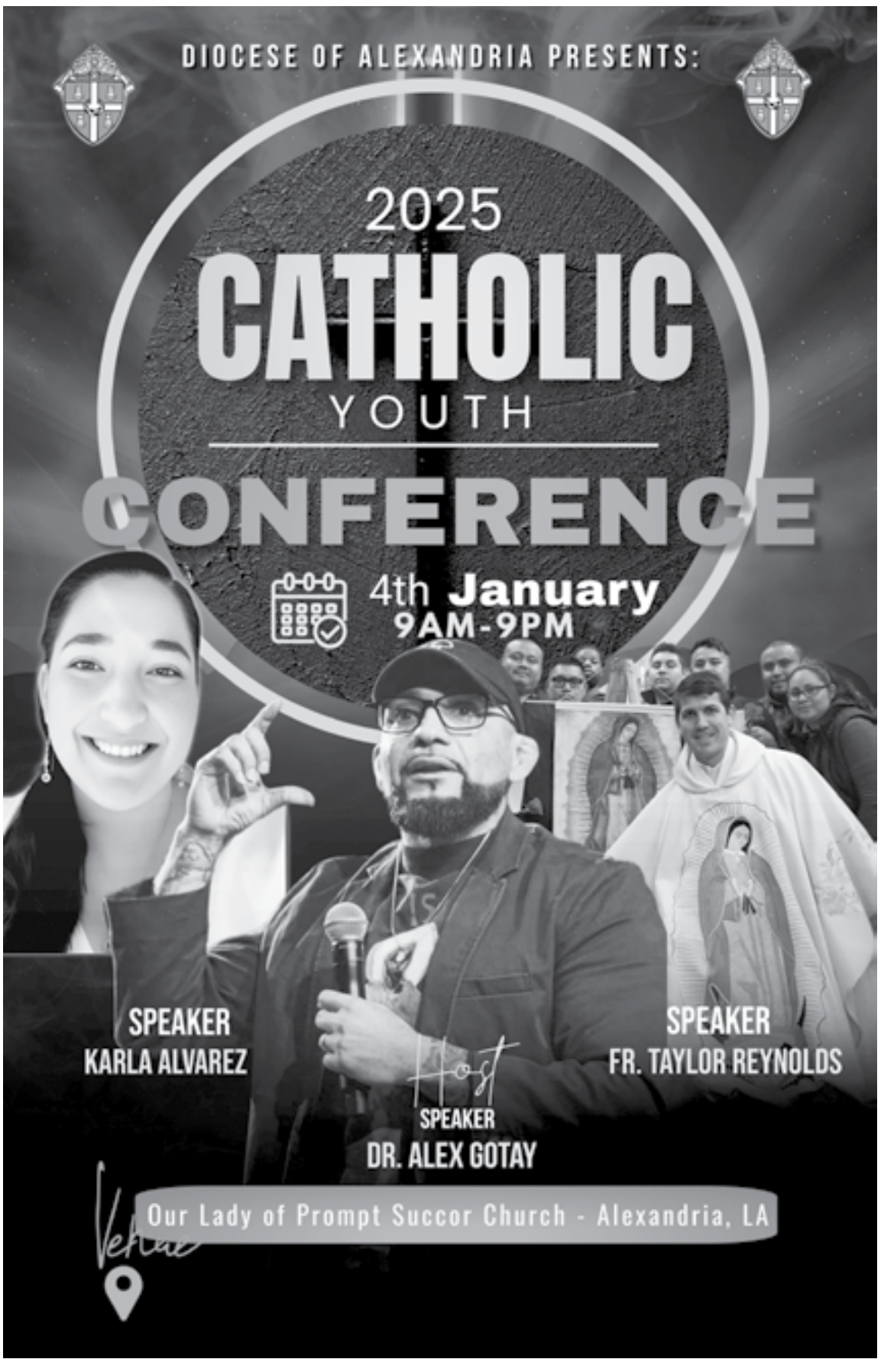
Youth Rally to focus on Hispanic Catholic Community

The Diocese of Alexandria is hosting a Catholic Youth Rally at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church at the Divine Providence Center on January 4th, 2025. The event will be held from 9am-9pm. The ages are all youth from middle school through high school. Catholic Extension has extended a grant to the Diocese to host an event geared toward Catholic youth, specifically from the Hispanic Catholic Community. However, all parishes are welcomed and encouraged to attend. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Alex Gotay, D.Min who is a nationally renowned speaker and catechist. The co-host will be Karla Alvarez who is the Director of Multicultural ministry for the Diocese of Shreveport, LA. Mass and evening Adoration will be celebrated by Fr. Taylor Reynolds. All talks and workshops will be held in English. The mass will be bi-lingual. The themes and topics are: missionary discipleship and evangelization in the modern world as well as the history of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego for young people. There is no cost to attend the event. Lunch and Dinner will be provided free of charge.

See the graphic below.



Our Lady of Guadalupe: December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Americas, appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531 on the hill of Tepeyac in present-day Mexico. Her miraculous image, imprinted on his tilma, depicts her as a loving mother clothed in radiant light, drawing millions to embrace the Catholic faith.

Known as a symbol of unity, hope, and protection, she continues to inspire devotion and serves as a reminder of God's care for all people, especially the marginalized.

Her feast day, December 12, is a celebration of faith and cultural heritage across the Americas.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

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THANKS -GIVING

(continued from pg. 8)

be thankful for the little things in our lives, we should be all the more thankful for the sacrifice Christ offered on our behalf! Further, he gives us a way to participate in his very sacrifice through the Eucharist.

Connecting the Eucharist and the Thanksgiving Holiday

When I was young, I lived deep in the Bible belt, where most of my friends were Protestant. I was petrified to admit I was Catholic. For me, Thanksgiving was merely a secular holiday when we as a country give thanks to God. I saw it mostly as a time to spend with family…together we would eat a large meal, take a family photo, watch football, and perhaps take just a few uncomfortable minutes before dinner to offer a short prayer of thanksgiving for family and food. I believe that we have separated our everyday lives so far from the Eucharist that when we hear that a day has been set aside for giving thanks to the Father, we don't even think of the Eucharist.

In my own life I can point to two separate reasons why I struggled to connect the Eucharist and Thanksgiving Day. First, if I am honest, I love the food, the football games, the time to relax with my wife and children, the time to visit family or bring over friends. I have also been tempted by the allures of our consumerist society, especially the looming Black Friday sales, beginning at (or even before!) midnight. More than once my wife and I visited larger retail stores for their midnight sales, while my children stayed with their grandparents. I enjoyed the shopping, even amidst the hordes of fellow shoppers. After one such experience, I happened to talk to my brother who had worked all day on Thanksgiving to prepare for the midnight sales. He told me that he hadn't been able to celebrate the holiday at all because of this. At that moment, I knew I needed to revisit my Thanksgiving shopping habits. Thanksgiving had become just another holiday and had lost almost all its original meaning!

Second, while I knew I needed to give thanks for the Eucharist, I found it difficult to see how the Eucharist is itself a liturgical action of thanksgiving. Part of my difficulty was that I always (mis)understood Eucharistic thanksgiving as an activity that first begins with us, individually or as a congregation.

The Best Way to Give Thanks

Though I can't identify any specific moment of insight, our Lord helped me see that before he handed the chalice of his Blood to his disciples, he first gave thanks. He, who was about to suffer horrifically and die for us, made his work of salvation an act of thanksgiving to the Father! This act of thanksgiving begins—must necessarily begin—with the thanksgiving of Jesus, our head. The best way to give thanks to the Father is to join our thanksgiving to the perfect act of thanksgiving by the Son in the Eucharist.

This Thanksgiving Day is a golden opportunity for us as Catholics to witness not only to the need for giving the Father thanks for his bountiful gifts and mercy, but also to unite ourselves with the greatest act of thanksgiving we can make as a Church. Let us gather "with humble spirit and contrite heart" in the Holy Spirit and give thanks to the Father for all his many blessings, uniting our offering with Christ's through the most sublime sacrament of the Eucharist.

Dr. Zachary Keith serves as Assistant Director for the Subcommittee on the Catechism at the USCCB.

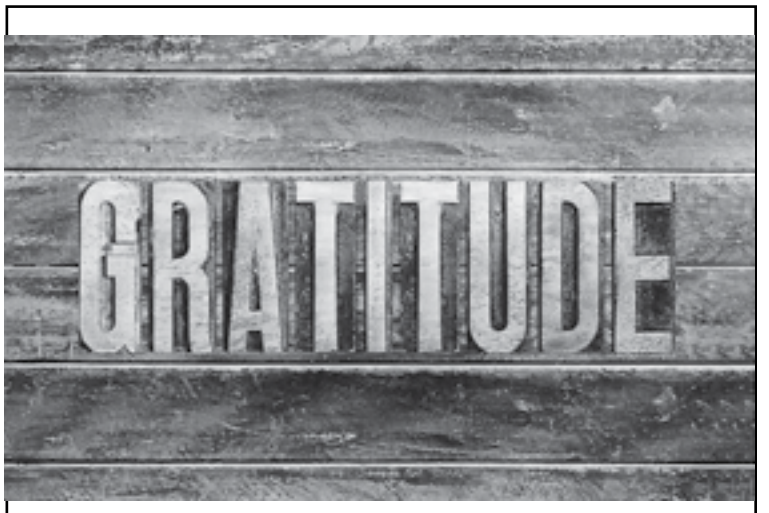
ACTS

Upcoming Retreats:

January 2-4, 2025
TEEN ACTS Retreat
hosted by
St. Mary's Assumption Church

January 16-19, 2025
Women's ACTS Retreat
hosted by
Our Lady of Prompt Succor
All retreats are held at Maryhill Renewal Center.

The best way to give thanks to the Father is to join our thanksgiving to the perfect act of thanksgiving by the Son in the Eucharist.



Our Lord and Savior came down to earth,
and gave us many gifts after our birth.

He forgave our sins and forgot our past,
The gifts that he gave were things that would last.

With the Holy Spirit and the graces He gave,
combine the two and you can be on your way.

Every day is a blessing for us to treasure,
Generously show gratitude; even more that can be measured.

So, get down on your knees and thank Him so much,
always show gratitude by keeping in touch.

by Marcus Descant, Leesville, Louisiana

lizdescant@gmail.com
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Cry out with joy and gladness; for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 12: 6
Responsorial Psalm
for December 15
Third Sunday of Advent

Women's Worship Workshop
December 7

St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph, LA will be hosting a women's workshop Saturday, Dec. 7 starting at 9:00 a.m. on Lake Bruin. The speaker will be Grammy nominated singer Laura Huval, who will offer talks, music, worship and more for any woman needing a refresher in the Lord. This event is provided FREE by St. Joseph Church. Brunch will be included and the day will end with Mass on the lake. For more information and to reserve your place, please email stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com.

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35TH ANNUAL BLUE MASS. The annual Blue Mass, honoring law enforcement, fire fighters, emergency personnel and other first responders, was held Friday, Nov. 8 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria with Bishop Robert W. Marshall officiating.

CARS FOR A CAUSE. The Cars for a Cause event was held Saturday, Oct. 26 in the parking lot of Holy Savior Menard High School. The fun event highlighted specialty, classic and restored cars and trucks, all benefitting the charities of the Knights of Columbus.

See the latest news from around the Diocese at www.diocesealex.org

HOLY SAVIOR MENARD INTRODUCED ITS INAUGURAL DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI CLASS, inducting graduates of Holy Savior Menard, Menard Memorial and Providence Central. The first class includes Harry Longwell (‘59), Ted Guillory (‘58), Sister CC Vanderlick (‘46), and Camille Gravel (‘31).

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Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Psalm 80: 4
Responsorial Psalm
for December 22
Fourth Sunday of Advent

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL, NATCHITOCHES. On Wednesday, Nov. 6, Bishop Robert Marshall traveled to Natchitoches to celebrate Mass with the students, faculty, and staff of St. Mary's School.

DISCOVER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK AT HOLY SAVIOR MENARD. Holy Savior Menard hosted the Future Eagles of Cabrini School and Our Lady of Prompt Succor School, enjoying a morning on campus for a scavenger hunt, tour, and school wide Mass.

DISCOVER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK AT SACRED HEART SCHOOL, MOREAUVILLE. Celebrating our 8th graders planning a trip to Washington D.C.

(above and below) OLPS GAINS STOP THE BLEED TRAINING. On Tuesday, Nov. 12, all of Our Lady of Prompt Succor School faculty and staff participated in the "Stop the Bleed" Training. We're proud to announce that every OLPS classroom is now equipped with a Stop the Bleed kit. A huge thank you to the Louisiana Firefighters Foundation for traveling to help train. OLPS is one of the few schools in the area to complete this important training!

LSUA AWAKENING RETREAT. Bishop Robert Marshall celebrated Mass on Sunday, Nov. 17 at Maryhill Renewal Center for the participants in "Generals Awakening 25" - a student led retreat sponsored by the LSUA Catholic Student Organization. Pictured with Bishop Marshall and the participants are Amelia Bordelon, Campus Ministry Coordinator, first row kneeling far right.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

(continued from pg. 4)

still learning how to express themselves and may need extra grace.

Some middle schoolers feel more comfortable opening up during an activity, such as playing a game or working on a craft. Side-by-side conversations can reduce pressure and create a natural environment for sharing.

Step 4: Enjoy the Journey

Middle schoolers are brimming with personality—they're funny, quirky, and often eager to connect with people who take the time to understand them. Celebrating their growth and victories, no matter how small, can make a lasting impact.

• Laugh at their jokes and embrace their sense of humor.

• Cheer them on in their pursuits, from sports to academics to creative projects.

• Celebrate their milestones, whether it's a good grade or a new skill they've mastered.

Connecting with middle schoolers is not only rewarding but also a lot of fun. By showing them the joy of life and faith, you can inspire them to embrace their own unique journey with confidence.

Why It Matters

Whether you're a parent, teacher, or mentor, investing in middle schoolers can have a lifelong impact. These formative years are a time of exploration and growth, and a trusted adult can help guide them toward positive choices and meaningful relationships.

By meeting them where they are, inviting them to engage, listening with care, and enjoying the process, you can make a difference in the lives of middle schoolers—and maybe even rediscover the joy of connection along the way.

Engaging with middle schoolers takes patience, but the rewards are immeasurable. They might just teach you a thing or two along the way!

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"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."
John 1:5

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Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.
Psalm 128: 1 | Responsorial Psalm for December 29
Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

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LSU of Alexandria:
LSUA Catholic Student Organization, 318-447-2956. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram @lsuacatholics

Northwestern State University:
NSU Catholic Student Organization FOCUS Ministries. Contact Holy Cross Church: (318) 352-2615

Louisiana Christian University:
LCU Catholic Student Organization "Wildcat Catholics" 318-447-2956. Follow us on Instagram @wildcatcatholics

First Sunday of Advent - Dec. 1

Beginning Saturday, Nov. 30, you can find Advent season resources at www.diocesealex.org.

#iGiveCatholic - Dec. 3

This Thanksgiving and Advent season, we invite you to join us in the spirit of gratitude by participating in #**iGiveCatholic**, a special opportunity to give back to your parish and local ministries. Advanced Giving opened on **Nov. 18**, and your involvement can make all the difference for a cause that is close to your heart. We are excited for this opportunity in our Diocese, and we hope that you will join us leading up to Giving Tuesday, **December 3** as we ***Give Thanks, Give Back, and Give Catholic***. Visit alexandria.igivecatholic.org to participate. Your generosity helps strengthen our community and inspire others. Thank you!

The Light Is On for You: Advent Day of Reconciliation - Dec. 5

In addition to Advent penance services, the Diocese of Alexandria will offer an Advent day for confession on Dec. 5 when most churches within the Diocese will offer a time in the evening to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Some churches may offer this on Dec. 4 or Dec. 6 due to previously scheduled events. Please check www.diocesealex.org for times that will be posted soon.

St. Nicholas Day - Dec. 5

Join us on Thursday, Dec. 5 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at St. Rita's Holy Family Center in Alexandria for our annual St. Nicholas Day celebration! We'll have special St. Nicholas activities including music and snacks. For ages infant to 3rd grade. A photo of your child with St. Nicholas will be available. For more information, contact Debbie Brown at 318-445-7141, ext. 214.

Sacred Heart Pineville Christmas Extravaganza - Dec. 7

Mark your calendars for Saturday, Dec 7, for a full day of activities, games for the children, pictures with Santa, Gumbo Cook-off, vendors, concessions, and much more in the Activities Building of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Pineville.

• Breakfast with Santa IS FREE 8:00-9:30 a.m. and includes pancakes, sausage, juice. Everyone can bring a canned good for Santa to take to feed the less fortunate at the North Pole.

• Raffle drawings - $5.00 for one ticket or $20.00 for 5 tickets

• Gumbo and sides dinner - Tickets $10.00.

We are still accepting Vendors. Donations to the Sweet Shop are appreciated and needed by Dec. 6. For more information about tickets or to participate you can call the Church Office: 318-445-2497 or Wade Trahant at 318-308-0406.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Women's Worship Workshop - Dec. 7

St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph, LA will be hosting a women's workshop Saturday, Dec. 7 starting at 9:00 a.m. on Lake Bruin. The speaker will be Grammy nominated singer Laura Huval, who will offer talks, music, worship and more for any woman needing a refresher in the Lord. This event is provided FREE by St. Joseph Church. Brunch will be included and the day will end with Mass on the lake. For more information and to reserve your place, please email stjosephinstjoe@gmail.com .

Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference - Dec. 7

Join us at Beyond the Limits, Jr. High Conference on Saturday, Dec. 7, to be illuminated in the light of Christ. All students in grades 6 - 8 are invited to attend this retreat with their parish youth group. Learn more at steubenvillesouth.com or follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates.

Mass, Confession, Special Prayers on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe - Dec. 12

The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Mass with Special Prayers for Healing will be held on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Thursday, Dec. 12 at St. Patrick Church, Ferriday. Reconciliation will be held 5:30-6:00 p.m. Holy Mass at 6:00 p.m. followed by prayers for healing.

Discalced Carmelites Monthly Meeting - Dec. 14

The Order of the Discalced Carmelites holds its monthly meeting at 9:00 a.m. every second Saturday, at Maryhill Renewal Center. Anyone is invited to attend morning prayer followed by Mass and then the meeting. If you are interested in Carmelite spiritual studies, please contact Mary Jo McCoy at 318-346-6860 or 318-481-9638. **If you plan to attend.....Please call Mary Jo McCoy at the numbers listed above OR Deacon Bill Travis at 318 640-2827 or 318 664-7069 and someone will meet you at the Maryhill gate.

SHS presents: An Old Fashioned Christmas USO Variety Show - Dec. 18

Join us at the Mari Convention Show Room in Marksville at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 18 for a Christmas show like you've never seen before! Students in grades PK3 through 8th grade will be participating in the show. Though there is no charge, a donation at the door is welcome. Presented by Sacred Heart School, Moreauville.

Christmas Program, Deville - Dec. 18

The CCD students of St. John the Baptist in Deville and Moncla as well as St. Winifred in Effie will present a Christmas program, "A Night in Bethlehem" on Wednesday, Dec. 18 at 6:00 p.m. in Greco Hall at St. John the Baptist in Deville.

SAVE THE DATE! Confirmation Retreat - Jan. 25

The Diocese of Alexandria will hold a Confirmation Retreat for any young person that is being confirmed in 2025. This is an opportunity for parishes who do not host an in-parish retreat to attend a retreat focused on the Sacrament of Confirmation. Cost is $10 per pesron, which covers lunch and speaker. The retreat will take place at Maryhill Renewal Center, Pineville, on Saturday, January 25, 2025. More details to come along with registration information. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Deacon Jason Lavergne at dcnjlavergne@diocesealex.org.

Church Today News Deadlines

December 23

Deadline for news: Thursday, Dec. 12

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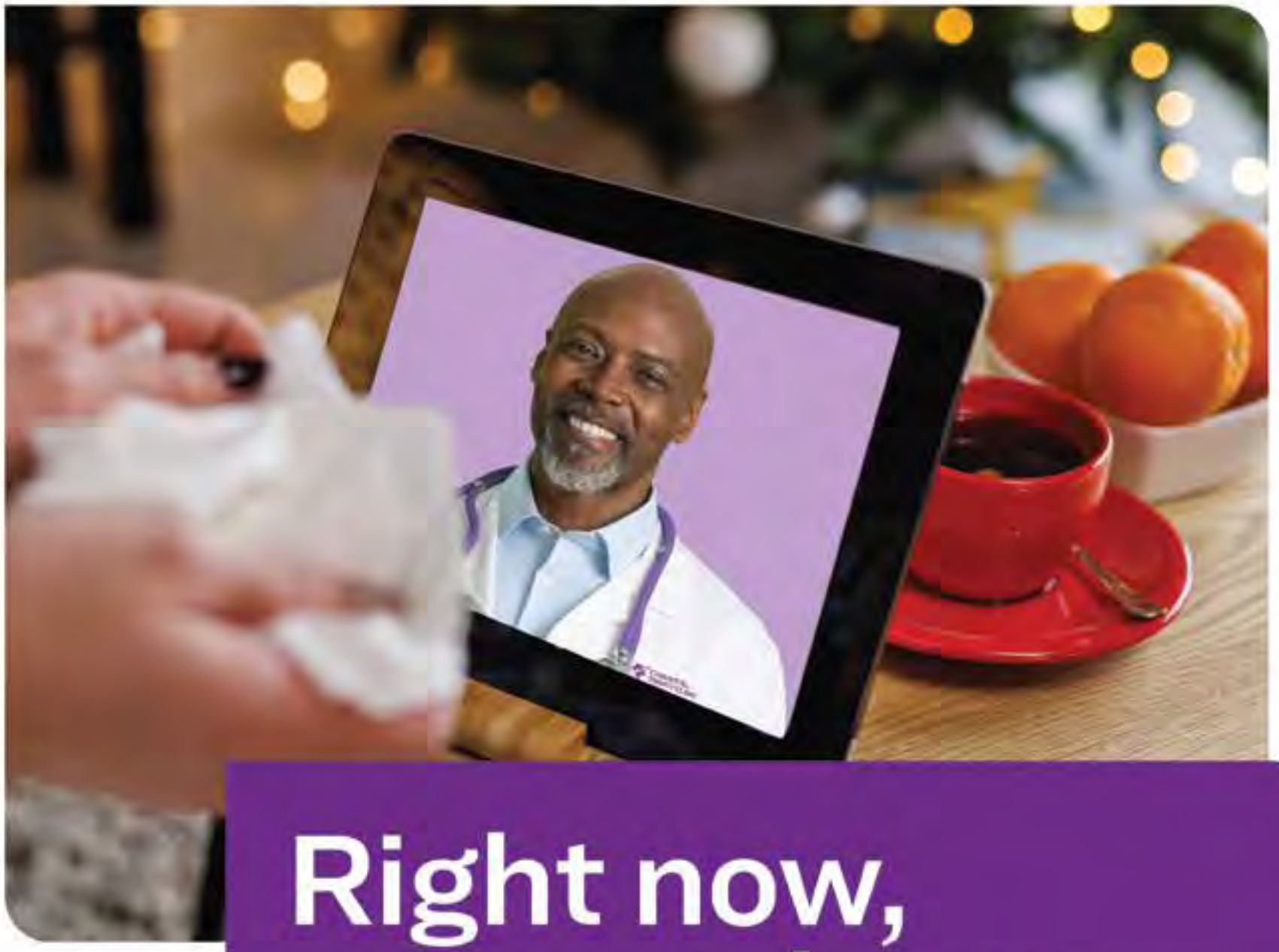
December 2024

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
NOVEMBER 25 **EMHC Workshop** 6:00-9:00 p.m. Sts. Francis and Anne Church, Kolin PRAY FOR FR. A. VARGHESE	26 PRAY FOR FR. V. VEAD	27 PRAY FOR FR. G. VOLTZ	28 THANKSGIVING DAY PRAY FOR DCN. L. WHITE	29 PRAY FOR DCN. J. WHITEHEAD	30 PRAY FOR FR. J. WILTSE	DECEMBER 1 **First Sunday of Advent** PRAY FOR BISHOP R. MARSHALL
2 PRAY FOR FR. J. XAVIER	3 **#iGiveCatholic all day today** GIVING TUESDAY PRAY FOR DCN. M. YOUNG	4 PRAY FOR FR. K. ZACHARIAH	5 **The Light is On For You: Advent Day of Reconciliation** **St. Nicholas Day** **6:30-8:00 p.m.** St. Rita Holy Family Center, Alexandria PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA	6 FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR DCN. W. ALDRIDGE	7 **Christmas Extravaganza** All Day Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville **Beyond the Limits Jr. High Conference** Alexandria **Womens' Worship Workshop** St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph, LA FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR DCN. F. ANDRADE	8 **Second Sunday of Advent** SOLEMNITY of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION of the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (not a Holy Day this year) PRAY FOR FR. J. ANTONY
9 PRAY FOR DCN. E.J. BARRE	10 PRAY FOR FR. S. BRANDOW	11 PRAY FOR FR. D. BRAQUET	12 **Special Mass for Healing** 6:00 p.m. St. Patrick Church, Ferriday FEAST of OUR LADY of GUADALUPE PRAY FOR FR. J. BROCATO	13 PRAY FOR FR. J. BURCH	14 **Discalced Carmelites Monthly Meeting** 9:00 a.m. Maryhill Renewal Center, Pineville PRAY FOR MSGR. S. CHEMINO	15 **Third Sunday of Advent** PRAY FOR DCN. R. CHRISTOPHER
16 PRAY FOR FR. J. CUNNINGHAM	17 PRAY FOR FR. W. DECOSTE	18 **Old Fashioned Christmas USO Show** 6:00 p.m. Mari Center, Marksville **Christmas Program** 6:00 p.m. St. John the Baptist Greco Hall, Deville PRAY FOR FR. D. DEJESUS	19 PRAY FOR DCN. LG DELOACH	20 PRAY FOR FR. B. DESHAUTELLE	21 PRAY FOR FR. J. DESIMONE	22 **Fourth Sunday of Advent** PRAY FOR FR. A. DHARMARAJ
23 PRAY FOR DCN. D. DUBROC	24 PRAY FOR FR. D. DUCOTE	25 CHRISTMAS DAY PRAY FOR DCN. R. DUCOTE	26 PRAY FOR DCN. W. ENDRIS	27 PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK	28 PRAY FOR DCN. L. FELDKAMP	29 FEAST of the HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH PRAY FOR MSGR. J. FERGUSON



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